

6 Christian Themes to Look For in the 2017 Wonder Woman Movie

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Spoiler Alert: The following article reveals key events/themes in Warner Bros.' 2017 Wonder Woman movie.

Did you walk out of the recent *Wonder Woman* movie feeling like you wanted to find your own “No Man’s Land” to conquer—with or without any nifty superhero powers? Well, you’re not alone. According to *Variety.com*, Warner Bros.’ *Wonder Woman* set a record in June 2017 for the highest grossing film ever directed by a woman (Patty Jenkins).

Christian themes abound in the movie, despite the non-Christian origins of both the Amazons and the DC Comics Wonder Woman character. While the Amazons in Jenkins' *Wonder Woman* are supposedly created by Zeus to protect humanity, the actual Amazons of Greek mythology were focused on making war—not peace—and were the daughters of Ares and Harmonia. Additionally, DC Comic's Wonder Woman was originally brought to life by the goddess Aphrodite after being made from clay by her mother, Hippolyta.

In the latest revamp, Wonder Woman is both the daughter of Zeus and sister to Ares, the Greek god of war. If you read this article by *Vanity Fair Magazine* and this one by *Smithsonian Magazine*, you will learn more about the history of Wonder Woman than you probably want to know, including the polyamorous lifestyle of her creator William Moulton Marston, the inventor of the lie detector machine. Marston also had a fascination with visual symbols of bondage (i.e. Wonder Woman's lasso and her gold cuffs).

Thankfully, Warner Bros.' *Wonder Woman* is a huge improvement over the original. With \$395 million in domestic earnings and \$786 million worldwide as of July 31 of this year, the movie clearly resonates with audiences for a variety of reasons, including a strong female heroine who is kind, compassionate, and tough. Interestingly, it also includes quite a few Christian parallels. Here are six biblical themes to look for in the 2017 superheroine flick:

1. Evil must be defeated.

Wonder Woman is determined to destroy evil. Likewise, Jesus came to put an end to evil forever.

Isolated on the island of Themyscira with the Amazons, the princess Diana is sheltered from any knowledge that a worldwide war (WWI) is taking place. After learning about the war from combo crash survivor/American pilot/spy Steve Trevor, Diana is determined to leave Themyscira and hunt down the assumed perpetrator of the war, Ares, son of the Greek god Zeus.

Christian theme: Like Diana, Jesus had a mission to destroy evil, but unlike Diana, he is the eternal and omniscient almighty God. He came to earth and was born in the flesh for the very purpose of defeating sin, death, and the devil at the cross, and one day he will return to put an end to evil and death forever.

While Christians wait for Jesus' return and the new heaven and earth to come, they should take every opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. They should also never look the other way in the face of evil in the world but must instead fight against it with the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18).

2. Evil by nature is covert.

Wonder Woman's friends don't believe her warning that Ares is real—and dangerous. Likewise, Satan wants to convince people that he isn't a threat.

None of Wonder Woman's friends believe her when she first tells them that a god of war exists. They find out eventually that she is telling the truth when they experience Ares' wrath and great power in his final battle with Wonder Woman.

Christian theme: It has been said that Satan's greatest accomplishment is convincing people that he isn't real. Many people write off the devil as a silly character in a red costume with horns and a tail. In reality, Ares is merely a fictional god, while Satan is a very real created being with great power. He is not a god, however, and can only do what God sovereignly allows.

Believers should expect attacks from the devil and be prepared. The apostle Peter exhorts believers to

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

Christians should never fear the devil, but that doesn't mean he won't try to make a shipwreck of their faith through various trials, persecutions, and sufferings (I Tim. 1:19). The devil is real, and people should not underestimate his power to wreak havoc on this earth. For proof of this, read Job 1:1-22 in the Bible. Yet, Christians can take heart from Jesus' words: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

3. The evil one deceives and persuades.

Ares tries to persuade Wonder Woman to join forces with him by promising her a better world. Likewise, the devil tried to entice Jesus to forsake God and covet the things of this world that are passing away.

Ares knows that Diana is on a mission to destroy him. He informs her that she is actually the daughter of Zeus—and Ares's sister—and he tries to entice Diana to join him so that they can rule together and bring peace to the world by destroying corrupt humanity.

Christian theme: The devil was on a mission to destroy the coming Messiah long before he was born in the flesh. When Jesus was beginning his ministry, Satan twisted Scripture out of context in order to tempt Jesus to worship him (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Yet, no

one knows God's word better than Jesus—because he is the Word incarnate (John 1:14).

Jesus—the second Adam—resisted Satan's temptations, unlike the first Adam in the garden of Eden who obeyed the devil rather than God (Gen. 3:1-7). Like Jesus, Christians not only need to know Scripture, but they also need to understand Bible verses in their proper context so they are not led astray by false teachings.

4. The evil one stirs up doubt.

Ares tries to convince Wonder Woman that it is useless to fight against him, since he is more powerful than she is. Likewise, Satan wants us to think he is more powerful than God.

Ares tries again and again—both with words and physical force—to persuade Wonder Woman to give up her mission to destroy him. Yet, Wonder Woman knows that it's up to her to defeat Ares because no one else can.

Christian theme: Believers don't have to worry about defeating the devil, because Jesus has already accomplished this feat at the cross. Satan's doom is sure, and Christians are safe and secure in God's love. The apostle Paul comforts believers with these words:

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39)

Every Christian can stand strong and confident in the Lord. Even if Satan destroys a believer's body, he can never take away someone's salvation in Christ, because Jesus has secured eternal redemption at the cross for all who trust in him. In the gospel of John, Jesus proclaims, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39).



5. Only the one appointed for the task will triumph.

Only Wonder Woman, the daughter of Zeus, can kill Ares, the son of Zeus. Likewise, only Jesus, being both fully God and fully human, could perfectly keep God's law and offer himself up as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, bringing to an end forever the tyranny of sin and death over us.

After Wonder Woman kills Ares in an epic battle, she realizes that evil still exists in the world. She concludes that everyone has good and evil in them, and she is committed to continue her fight against evil while recognizing the good in people.

Christian theme: The problem with this world is not only the devil. The problem is also *us*. The Bible says that God made people in his image, and that everything he made was good—indeed, “it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Because of Adam’s disobedience and fall, all people bear Adam’s guilt, since Adam represented all humanity. Furthermore, Adam’s sin caused the corruption of his nature, and all his posterity—including you and me—now bear that same sinful nature.

The apostle Paul described the far-reaching consequences of Adam’s rebellion: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Instead of communing daily with God, humans are now unworthy to stand in their Creator’s holy presence because of their sinful nature.

Wonder Woman's conclusion that everyone is partly good and partly evil closely parallels the heretical fourth-century teaching known as semi-Pelagianism. This is not the biblical description of humanity. The Bible teaches that everyone is wholly sinful (Rom. 3:10-18).

Just as it was not enough for Wonder Woman to destroy Ares, it is not enough to just destroy the devil. All human beings are guilty before God in Adam and because of their own sin, and are unable to stand in God's presence without the saving work of Christ on their behalf. Death is the final enemy that only Christ could—and will—destroy forever (1 Cor. 15:26). The apostle Paul declares,

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."
"O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:54-57)

6. Humanity needs a champion.

It is only when Diana arrives and successfully crosses the “No Man’s Land” zone that the allies are able to break through enemy lines on the Western Front. Likewise, we can’t conquer the devil, death, or our enslavement to sin without help from outside of ourselves.

When Diana arrives on the Western Front in Belgium with Steve Trevor and his men, she learns from a woman taking cover in the barricade that many people, including children, are suffering horribly in the town next to enemy lines. Trevor tells Diana that it is impossible to cross the zone to help the innocent civilians, but Wonder Woman refuses to stand by and do nothing. She boldly enters “No Man’s Land” and provides cover for the allied forces so they can finally take the enemy line and free the civilians.

Christian theme: In order for God to uphold all his attributes of love, righteousness, holiness, justice, mercy, and goodness, it was necessary for Jesus to come to earth and be born in the flesh. As fully God and fully man, Jesus lived the perfect life we should have lived, and he was the perfect sacrifice we were obligated to pay so that we could be restored to a right relationship with God. There was no other way for us to be saved without God being both “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26).

It is not enough to be a “pretty good” person. Just as God is holy, we too must be holy, either by our own works—which is impossible because of our sin—or by the finished work of Christ counted to us through faith in him by God’s grace.

While Christians will continue to struggle against sin in this life in their mortal bodies, one day all things will be made new, and they will live with God and each other together in glory forever. God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4)—all because of what Christ has done for them.

Everyone needs the Lamb of God—the one and only “Sin-Killer.”

In the *Wonder Woman* movie, Ares knows that Diana is the real god-killer—not her sword—and that she alone can stop him. In real life, we need a sin-killer, not a god-killer. Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil not with a physical sword but with his perfect life offered up as the Lamb of God.

Whereas Diana uses her superpowers to defeat Ares, Jesus bore the humiliation and pain unto death by taking on human flesh and being rejected, beaten, scorned, and crucified because of his love for the world. Satan arrogantly thought that he could finally destroy Jesus on the cross, but it is at the cross where Jesus won the victory over Satan, death, and sin’s grip over us—and his historical resurrection from the dead proves that death could not hold him in its grasp.

While in the fictional *Wonder Woman* movie the parallels with the Bible are imperfect at best, they provide an opportunity to give us insight into important biblical truths every person needs to know. Whether we want to believe it or not, God is real, the devil is real, and the wretched state of the world should be evidence enough that sin is real. Just because people think that God won’t call them to account some day for all their thoughts and deeds on this earth, doesn’t mean they are right.

Today is the day of salvation.

Jesus first came to earth like a lamb in humility, but he will return like a lion to judge sin and evil and rule and reign forevermore. In his mercy, God sovereignly and graciously allows evil to exist on the earth while Christ builds his kingdom. The apostle Peter tells us,

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
(2 Pet. 3:9)

If you haven't done so already, receive God's loving gift of grace in Christ and trust in Jesus as your savior today.

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

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Le Ann Trees is managing editor of Beautiful Christian Life. This article was originally published on October 11, 2017.